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ABSTRACT

This study of high school students argues that American high school classes continue to be unsuccessful and boring to students because they artificially separate intellectual achievement and social development of adolescents. To understand how students view their high school priorities and the role of their experiences in the transition from adolescence to adulthood, this study used interviews of students in five high school yearbook classes in a large cosmopolitan school system and an analysis of their yearbooks. Individual students completed questionnaires and each class participated in a focus group session for 45 to 90 minutes. These students valued the markers of independence outlined by H. Chang (1992): getting along with everyone, becoming independent, and getting involved. They mentioned friends as their most memorable high school experience. The students' responses make it clear that opportunities for adolescents to develop socially are not readily available in academic classes as they are presently taught. The subject matter may appear marginally relevant, but the outcomes are artificial. Student social development occurs outside of class. What they value and remember are the rites and rituals that act as markers of independence on their journeys toward adulthood. The sophomore year had the fewest rites, creating a sort of sophomore slump. A way to respond to their school needs and their disenchantment with academic classes would be to design academic rites of passage that capitalize on their desire to become adults. Another way would be to redesign instructional practices. (Contains 1 table and 33 references.) (SLD)

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High School as a Rite of Passage for Social *and* Intellectual Development

Studies since the mid-eighties have painted a disturbing picture of American high schools, citing a lack of academic rigor and low student achievement.[1] Instruction has been categorized as mediocre, expectations as minimal, and student interest and academic engagement as almost nonexistent (Goodlad, 1984; Hampel, 1986; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985; "Public Agenda," 1998; Sizer, 1984/1992). Educators and policymakers are developing national and statewide standards as well as assessment strategies to raise academic expectations and student performance. The standards reflect concerns expressed by employers and college professors that students are not prepared well enough in high school ("The Urban Challenge," 1998), although parents, students, and community members express satisfaction with their local high schools as they are ("Public Reality," 1998).

Heath (1994) argues that parents want schools that are "safe, predictable and benign" (p. 357) where they recognize familiar structures and rituals from their own youth (Donavel, 1995). Parents, students, and teachers have indicated that the pursuit of academics may not be the principal goal of the high school experience. In a survey asking parents, students, and teachers to choose the most important goal of education as academic, vocational, social and civic, or personal, half the parents believed that the high school's primary function is something other than academic, a perception shared by almost 75% of the students (Goodlad, 1984). These results

were reminders of earlier studies (Bester, 1953; Hollingshead, 1939/1975; Lynd & Lynd, 1929).

After decades of research indicating that high schools are academically weak and uninteresting for students, the United States is attempting to improve academic rigor and raise test scores by creating new standards, tests, and policies to improve instruction (e.g., National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). This paper argues that American high school classes continue to be unsuccessful and boring to students because they artificially separate intellectual achievement and social development of adolescents. Students currently use high school as a rite of passage experience to meet their developmental goals apart from their academic experience. Earlier research and students in this study indicate that repeated calls for higher academic expectations and student achievement can be more effective if educators and policymakers pay attention to the ways in which markers of independence and rites of passage provide means for adolescents' social development.

High School as a Transition from Adolescent to Adult

High school students are caught in the middle of the recent standards debate, but are rarely asked about educational issues or policies affecting them even though American high schools are in trouble. "Few students must invest themselves seriously in a sustained fashion" (Sedlack, Wheeler, Pullin, & Cusick, 1987, p. 13) and while most believe that their course content is relevant, they do not find classes "exciting or interesting" (The Mood of American Youth, 1996, p. 17). This hardly

represents the primary purpose of high schools articulated in Breaking Ranks (NASSP, 1996): "High school is, above all else, a learning community and each school must commit itself to expecting demonstrated academic achievement for every student in accord with standards that can stand up to national scrutiny" (p. 2). But despite renewed rhetoric, personnel in business, industry, and higher education have insisted for quite some time that high school graduates are not prepared to meet basic workplace or undergraduate demands (Giella & Stanfill, 1996).

From a social perspective, the United States has created a long period of "compulsory youth" that leaves adolescents in a "twilight zone of status ambiguity" (Carnegie Council, 1980, p. 14). Their status as neither children nor adults is reflected in their lack of economic or social usefulness that extends for years. Horton and Hunt (1968) suggest that the transition from adolescent to adult status is a tenuous or "undefined situation" in our society because "we lack any systematic preparation, or any general agreement upon the age, achievement or type of ceremony which clearly establishes the transition into adult status" (p. 115). Goodlad (1984) noted that the high school is the only American institution in which adolescents can participate in the rituals and social structures that might be construed as rites of passage from childhood to adulthood in modern society.

Research suggests that while adolescents seek independence from adults, they still rely on adults as models. For example, as adolescents search for an identity as part of their transition from adolescence to adulthood, they tend to criticize (but secretly appreciate) strict teachers and their emphasis on order (Lightfoot, 1983).

Cognitively, adolescents become increasingly capable of engaging in formal operations. They demonstrate increased facility with language, display an emerging ability to think symbolically, make judgments, and hypothesize about situations. Adolescents also begin to think in terms of the past and the future, and to develop an interest in social issues (Oppenheimer, 1990). During their transition to adult status, social and personal concerns, including' concerns about belonging and a preference for peer interactions, make academic work almost "an intrusion" (Goodlad, 1984, p. 78).

Adolescents work their way to independence by achieving certain symbolic markers of independence (Chang, 1992) and by participating in a variety of rites of passage and rites of intensification (Burnett, 1969; Chapple & Coon, 1942; Van Gennep, 1909/1960). But "taken cumulatively, research findings regarding the youth culture lead one to wonder why we have taken so little practical account of them in schools" (Goodlad, 1984, p. 75).

Markers of independence.

Chang's (1992) ethnographic study focused on adolescents' efforts to move toward adulthood, and on the markers of independence that students achieved to meet their maturational goals. Chang (1992) described adolescent ethos (characteristic attitudes and beliefs) in three parts: getting along with everyone, becoming independent, and getting involved. Getting along with everyone implies being friendly to other students, being popular, establishing a good reputation, maintaining extensive peer interaction, and avoiding the appearance of being

unwilling to mix with students outside of one's usual social group.

The quest for independence is universal. But in the United States, reaching sixteen "activate[s] the transition process into adulthood" (Chang, 1992, p. 125) and is perceived as a significant rite of passage for students. At sixteen, students seek to prove this new-found status by learning to drive. According to Chang (1992), they also invest time and energy in achieving other symbolic markers of independence: employment, fundraising to support or subsidize a school event, dependence on peers, willingness to take increased responsibility, and the ultimate marker of moving away from home.

Chang (1992) determined that getting involved--active involvement and constant activity--is a significant feature of adolescent ethos. Students' motivation to be active stems from having something to do, having fun, developing friendships, becoming well known, and building a good record for the future. Adolescents demonstrate their interest in getting involved through informal peer interactions, jobs, and their school, community, and family activities. "Many teenagers [are] 'bored' if they [have] nothing to do: some classes [are] boring, because they [require] minimal involvement other than lecture, note-taking or individual seatwork" (p. 144). Students define classes as "fun" if they offer a variety of programs including simulation activities or field trips.

"The developmental task of moving toward emotional, social, and economic independence from the family doesn't take place in the academic curriculum" (Klesse, 1994, p. 14). In high schools, extracurricular activities provide an avenue to

get along, fulfill the need for active involvement, and manage the move toward independence. Students can maintain "individuality in a group, [practice] appropriate adult behavior in different settings, and . . . [cope] with peer pressure" (pp. 9-10) through socialization with peers, a critical component of the high school's extracurricular program.

Coleman (1961) suggests that students, tired of their passive student roles, get involved in extracurricular activities so they can invest the available "passionate devotion" they possess but that is not encouraged or demanded in their academic classes (p. 315). Participation in extracurricular activities provides a sense of belonging or esprit de corps (Lightfoot, 1983); fosters cooperation, sportsmanship, and responsibility (Sham, 1986); and reduces the likelihood of students dropping out of school (McNeal, 1995). Heath (1994) and Cushman (1994) noted that several longitudinal studies have demonstrated that involvement in high school extracurricular activities is still the best school-related predictor of effectiveness as an adult.

Rites and rituals of high school.

Rites of passage mark the attainment of social maturity, not physical maturity (Van Gennep, 1909/1960), and are used to formalize an individual's status change within a culture (Chapple & Coon, 1942). Rites of passage are both "intellectually marked" and "emotionally felt" (Marcus & Fischer, 1986, p. 61).

Rites of intensification, on the other hand, help groups pass through changes of seasons, commemorate events important to the group, or create balance if faced

with a change in conditions. Typically, both rites of passage and rites of intensification are accompanied by anticipation and symbols attached to a ritual.

In the absence of recognized rites of passage in American society, many of the rituals marking the transition from adolescence to adulthood are left to the high school to accomplish. Burnett (1969) described rites of passage within the high school community as ceremonies that encourage students to behave in new and different ways required by their change in social status. Such events include freshman initiation, the ring ceremony and dance, graduation, the alumni banquet, and the senior trip.

Burnett (1969) believed that high school students also participate in rites of intensification designed to restore the interactive balance among students faced with a change in condition. These rites of intensification provide a transition for students from one state to another within the school community. For example, pep rallies allow students to move from their student state to their spectator state at the Friday night football game whereas a winter dance allows students to adjust from their school routine to the extended vacation spent with family away from school. Other rites of intensification in the high school program include homecoming, seasonal sports banquets, Honors Day, and dances to mark semester breaks and holidays.

Burnett (1969) also portrayed the entire high school experience as a four year rite of passage, a cycle of changing relationships for each class. As students move through high school, they enjoy increased prestige, power, and responsibility for the

orchestration of school events. For example, fundraising for the senior trip is usually reserved for junior and senior classes. Thus, juniors learn from seniors and have a year to anticipate and plan for their own senior trip as they in turn initiate the students following them. The majority of rituals in high school, while they may correlate to grade levels, tend to be linked to extracurricular activities rather than to academic advancement. They also tend to carry responsibility for duties and provide meaningful tasks for students to perform. However, like the markers of independence, few high school rites are linked to academic achievement.

Research Methodology

One of the most obvious reminders of high school experiences and culture is the school yearbook. Yearbooks traditionally reflect the markers of independence noted by Chang (1992) and the rites of passage and intensification described by Burnett (1969). The minimal attention to academics in yearbooks underscores research suggesting that students' goals for high school are not congruent with schools' stated goals which usually focus on academics.

To understand how students view their high school priorities and the role of their experiences in their transition from adolescence to adulthood, this study involved interviews of students in five high school yearbook classes in a large cosmopolitan school system, and an analysis of their yearbooks. Assumptions undergirding the study were that high school students can articulate their culture, that educators can and should learn from students, and that students' perspectives on what is meaningful and important in their high school experiences are reflected

in their interviews and yearbooks.

Individual participants completed a questionnaire and each class participated in a focus group interview for 45 to 90 minutes, depending on the school timetable. The semi-structured interview guide allowed flexibility for the different contexts. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed, then transcripts and questionnaires were analyzed for content based on Chang's (1992) markers of independence, rites (Burnett, 1969), student perceptions of academics, and unanticipated themes. Triangulation of sources and peer debriefers helped ensure that interpretations and conclusions were warranted based on the evidence.

The five classes' yearbooks were also analyzed using an instrument based on content categories designated by the Columbia Scholastic Press Association (Savedge, 1985). The clubs and activities category was expanded to include the extracurricular categories reported in The Mood of American Youth (NASSP, 1996). Instances of rites (Burnett, 1969) and references to driving and jobs as markers of independence were also included (see Hoffman, 1996 for an elaboration of methodology).

What Students Said

High school participants in this study valued the markers of independence outlined by Chang (1992): getting along with everyone, becoming independent, and getting involved. In both the surveys and interviews, they mentioned friends--having them, making them, keeping them--as their most memorable high school experience. Above all, the students valued their best friends with whom they socialized at lunch, after school, and on weekends. They talked about "finding the

right kind of friends" and "how they have been there for me." One student wrote, "When I reflect back on high school when I am an adult, I'll remember most the amazing relationships I had. I have terrific friends and we have great times." The students also valued acquaintances with whom they interacted only at school, as well as the large number of peers whose faces they recognized in the halls each day. One student, commented that what she would miss after graduation was "the people. The people that I just kind of associate with. Not people that you go out with, you're still going to see them, but the people that you just see."

The students in the five high schools tended to view employment, time with friends, and getting a driving license as typical ways of asserting independence, although driving a car and having one at their disposal was more valuable than getting a license. They did not spend much time or energy in fundraising and only one student had left home.

Students' energy focused heavily on getting involved outside their academic classes and the resulting benefits. Klesse's (1994) observation that extracurricular activities are critical to "maintaining one's individuality in a group, practicing appropriate adult behavior in different settings, and understanding and coping with peer pressure" (p. 9-10) was evident in this study as well. Maintaining one's individuality, as a student explained, is easier outside the classroom: "Maybe the reason nobody's talking about academics is because it's, like, something everybody has to do? And, like everybody knows about it so they don't care about it? So you tell the things that make you different, outside of school." Students also tried out

adult roles outside the classroom. One student was offered a paying job as a result of the quality of her hospital volunteer work while another noted that part time jobs provide opportunities to build relationship skills; "you get to see how you are, like if you can control your temper." Opportunities to build relationships and deal with peers also seem more available outside classrooms. One student took a school leadership position and learned to deal effectively with students who gave her "a lot of negative feedback because no matter what you do, somebody's gonna complain."

Several students also recognized that active involvement in school activities such as the senior steering committee gave them power and influence:

> We're not the type [of] people that just sit back and let everything else, let things happen to us. So we figured if we wanted everything to work out, um, to our pleasing, then we should be the ones looking and trying to get things done . . . . even though it's more work.

Leadership, trust, and responsibility.

Students also viewed jobs and extracurricular activities as important for practicing leadership, for gaining trust, and, above all, for learning responsibility. They clearly equated leadership skills (also see Powell, Farrar, and Cohen, 1985), trust of other adults, and increased responsibility--any or all of which may overlap--with development toward adulthood and independence. For example, one student noted that her leadership roles in student government provided significant benefits to her development: "For me, it made me more responsible, organized, and it made me learn how to deal with people more. How to deal with different kinds of

people."

A yearbook section editor explained how responsibility requires time and effort and can produce stress: "If you're that section's editor, I mean, it's like your job to make sure that everyone's done, and even if, like, each person in the section has an assigned thing and it's not done, then it, like, comes down on you, and you have to get it done." She added that the pressure came from her desire to be responsible and do a good job. "It wasn't like [the advisor] or anything. It was just like, I wanted to make sure it was all right and we have it in on time." Students recalled coming in at six in the morning or staying until nine at night to meet deadlines. They spoke harshly of students who neglected to fulfill obligations or appeared to be "slacking off." In one high school, they pressured an irresponsible peer to work harder. When their efforts failed, they pressured the advisor to have the student removed from the yearbook class.

Students valued being dependable and being trusted by adults and peers alike. Yearbook class is "not like a normal class. Like, if you sit back and don't do anything, you know, it's going to affect more than just you." Overwhelmingly, these students considered responsibility synonymous with adulthood and they equated responsibility with putting time and effort into worthwhile endeavors. In yearbook class, determined not to let down their peers and the advisor who trusted them, they felt compelled to rise to the occasion:

> This class has made me have a great deal of responsibility. Not only did I fulfill my obligations as a member of the [yearbook] staff because my grade

depended on it, but because I knew that someone was actually counting on me to finish my work and make the deadline.

They also enjoyed the sense of accomplishment and pride of effort in completing the yearbook:

> It really leaves an impression on your mind. And then when your yearbook actually comes in at the end of the year and you get to see all the work you put into it, and you get to see the final copy, it's a really good feeling!

Rites of Passage in High Schools

Not only were students in this study heavily involved in extracurricular activities, they also looked forward to the extracurricular rites of passage and rites of intensification in their schools. Table 1 summarizes these rites; many or all are familiar to American high school graduates.

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Two points are noteworthy. First, the National Honor Society Induction is the only high school rite directly related to academic achievement, and second, the sophomore year at all five schools has no specific rites:

> The sophomore class, well, nothing happens your sophomore year, pretty much . . . Your junior year, you get your ring, and your senior year, you're a senior, so I mean, your sophomore year you don't really do anything but sign up to get your ring at the end of the year, and that's really nothing.

One yearbook reflected the same lack while capturing the essence of high school as a four year rite of passage experience:

Freshman experience the excitement and fear of high schools, sophomores are mixed in the middle, juniors share the thrill of upperclass status and the ring ceremony, and seniors finally reach the end of their high school journey.

The Role of Academic Classes

Students rarely spoke spontaneously about their academic classes. When asked why they had not mentioned their academic work in their discussions about memorable high school experiences, one student said, "Because it's not!" accompanied by laughter from the rest of the class. "Our academics are just an ordinary, like, everyday thing. They're what we do every day, and so we're pretty sure that nothing really spectacular will happen that we'll really remember."

In their yearbooks, extracurricular activities and the students involved in them were heavily represented, most often at the expense of coverage of academics. Two of the high schools had no academic section at all. Students' lack of interest in academic classes was reflected in their unwillingness to have an academic section, or in attempts to combine academic and faculty sections. In one high school, students confided that the academic and faculty sections were among the least popular yearbook sections to be assigned. When asked why, a student called out "Boring!" to the laughter of his peers. In the school that wanted to win medalist status by improving its academics section, students laughingly included pictures "to show that teachers have, like, lives. . . . just to show that they had a personal side to them." Students' enjoyment of relationships with peers clearly did not transfer to their relationships with their academic teachers, although they enjoyed a very

different relationship, sometimes affectionate, with their yearbook advisors.

In four of the five high schools, students' comments and demeanor demonstrated their respect and affection for their yearbook advisors who let them know what is appropriate and permissible. They articulated awareness of the advisors' trust and confidence in them and appeared to value and accept the advisors' judgments even when they disagreed with the outcome. In one school, the elimination of an academic section in the yearbook was not even discussed because the advisor had firmly articulated her position on the matter. Her students had also considered including "bloopers" (senior portraits that were unflattering and had to be retaken). They laughingly explained that they never took this section idea past the discussion stage because they "ran it by her [the advisor] and that was the end."

In another school, students recalled that their advisor had refused to print the picture of an expelled student. In discussing the reasoning for the advisor's decision, a student explained as others contributed nods and murmurs of assent: "He's always looking at the big picture. Like, he is wondering how is it going to affect everybody? While we're thinking, 'Well, this is a good idea' and not really going outside of the classroom."

At only one school was this special relationship between students and advisors absent. Students explained that the advisor had not wanted the assignment and seemed unprepared and overwhelmed. They explained that the advisor "couldn't handle certain situations and he'd freak out a lot and nag us, and

he just couldn't handle the stress involved, definitely." The senior yearbook students who had been schooled by the previous advisor recognized problems ahead of time: "There's a lot of students knew would not provide sufficient time for accurate proofreading for errors and omissions." Another added, "[Our advisor] would be, like, 'Oh, well, we don't have time to check it now. We'll just wait 'til the proofs come in.' Which is too late." But even though the experienced editors recognized and predicted problems, they did nothing about them in the absence of adult guidance.

Yearbook Class and Academic Classes

Yearbook, like band or orchestra class, is in a unique position in the high school program because it is considered an academic class in which students earn a grade, but it requires so much additional work that it takes on the characteristics of an extracurricular activity as well. Students spoke most passionately about the responsibility yearbook classes demand: "You have deadlines and stuff that you need to do. You really have a lot of responsibility." They were aware that failure to adhere to deadlines incurred financial penalties for the book. They repeatedly described feelings of obligation to their classmates who rely on them and who "should take it seriously because it's their book and it's like, it's not, it's a real thing, you know?" They fretted over omissions and insufficient time to review and improve copy. Yet they also looked forward with great anticipation to accomplishing their goal of producing an excellent yearbook and the "good feeling" of seeing a finished product.

Several students attempted to explain the differences between yearbook class and other classes in their schedules. One student noted that she learned more in yearbook class than in any other class and that it was unlike any other class she had ever taken. Another student said, amid nods of affirmation from several others, "Yearbook's really hard. I mean, it's not like a normal class. It's not like you come in here and all the work you do is in the classroom. I mean, you put a lot of time in, like after school."

Another student commented on enjoying yearbook class because "it's something different every day." When reminded that she surely did something different in math class each day, she provided more support for her point of view:

> You don't just follow the book [in yearbook class]. In class [other classes] you're sitting there and you're taking notes and you're doing what the teacher says. In here, you're on your own to accomplish something. In class, you're given, you know, a ditto to do or a drill to copy or a test to take. In here, though, we have no tests. Our test is our own personal goal that we have to meet. Or the goal of the whole yearbook. So, it's like, you know, we're all working together to accomplish one thing. In class you've got to decide if you want an A, B, C, D, or E, or what you want. So in here, it's like, we're working together to accomplish something.

Another student added:

> Well, in here [yearbook class], it's not like we're told, "Today you're going to do headlines, today you're going to write five [pieces of] copy, today, you're

gonna write layout." It's pretty much up to everyone themselves to pace themselves and work at their own pace to get the finished product done. Whereas if you're in an academic class, you're doing a set thing at a set time every day.

Students did not consider academic classes challenging, memorable, or fun: "It's not fun, it's just your basic routine. You go into class, you do your drill, and do your classwork." Students agreed that not much is memorable: "Well, we've been doing classwork and homework ever since we were six, and high school's no different; it's just more of the same."

Students were unconvinced that academic classes are relevant to their future. One student said, "I take business and finance classes for my future." A senior commented that "high schools aren't preparing people for college anyway" and another student added:

> So it [high school academic work], like, really doesn't matter so much because when we get to college it's like a whole different experience and it's like, high school isn't preparing us, so, I mean, I think that's probably why academics aren't a big concern to the students, partly because they know it isn't going to matter.

Similarly, students rarely spoke warmly about academic teachers. Students at one school spoke positively about teachers who were immune to excuses for late or undone work and who expected students to put their subject first. One senior appreciated her advanced English class teacher:

> It's difficult and you really, a lot of times you really have to keep track of what you're doing and it's more responsibility, I think, than any other class I've taken in high school. It's a lot of reading, writing, and just high expectations, even in the way you speak in class.

However, the development of student responsibility through intellectual exertion was rare:

> I know now, now that I've been accepted to a school that has really high standards, I've looked back at some of the things, some of the teachers I've had, and there's only, there's very few that have actually taught me to be, to look for harder experiences in life. Like, some teachers just teach you what you need to know, but, like, other teachers will prepare you for other things and they'll show you how it's going to be, and there are very few teachers that do that.

With few exceptions, academic classes did not demand the same responsibility and work of yearbook classes and were not memorable to students. However, responsibility and effort were valuable and memorable: "Things like art and yearbook, in which I was really involved, will always stay with me." It seems that successfully meeting obligations and expectations set by demanding adults allows students to increase their sense of responsibility, enhancing their development toward adulthood. It also appears that students want to be grown up and responsible, but require the adults in their lives to insist that they behave that way.

What Students Can Teach Educators and Policymakers

The external appearance of high school students has altered over time and fads have come and gone, but adolescents' needs for social development have not changed. Students seem to intuit that adolescence is a period for developing toward adulthood by learning to get along with others, by becoming independent, and by getting involved. They appreciate responsibility and being trusted, but still need guidance from adults with high standards and expectations.

Opportunities for adolescents to develop socially are not readily available in academic classes as they are presently taught. While subject matter may appear marginally relevant to students' lives and their future, outcomes are artificial (often tests instead of "real" products). Little time or intellectual effort is required outside the assigned class period, individual rather than group effort and achievement is valued, students' work is not public, and teachers rather than students determine the direction, amount of work, and content for each class. Students have few opportunities to show leadership, take responsibility, or enjoy teachers' trust. Given adolescents' desire for social development, it is not surprising that even though they spend the majority of their school time in class, their classes are not memorable and their social development occurs outside the classroom.

What students value and remember are the rites and rituals that act as markers of independence on their journey toward adulthood. The sophomore year has the fewest rites, creating a sort of sophomore slump between the excitement of freshman year and the increasing number of rites and opportunities in the junior

and then the senior year.

One way to respond to students' social needs and their disenchantment with academic classes is to design academic rites of passage that capitalize on students' desire to become adult. Few high school rites are currently related to academic accomplishments, yet there is ample evidence to indicate that creating and linking rites of passage to academic achievement at each grade level could integrate students' social development needs into their academic classes. The new rites would have to represent a culmination of work that demands group effort and responsibility, as well as a real product for a public audience. The new rites would also have to capture the mystery and power of current rituals, but would have to include all students instead of being reserved for a small group like national honor society inductees.

A second way to respond to students' social needs and their aversion to boring classes is to redesign instructional practices in high schools. Classwork should integrate Chang's (1992) adolescent ethos to make classes meaningful and productive so students can work toward adulthood within academic classes instead of waiting until after classes to practice getting along with everyone, becoming independent, and getting involved. Academic classes should be structured in ways that respond to students' discussions of what they value in their yearbook and advanced placement classes. Students have provided a prototype for meaningful academic classes: They require students to set goals, to invest significant effort and involvement, to take leadership and responsibility, to be dependable, to meet

obligations, and to produce a high quality final product that meets expectations set by demanding adults.

High schools do not need to remain intellectual wastelands where students wait to get out of classes so they can get on with the social development that will move them toward adulthood. However, social development and rites of passage are not valued by or meaningful for educators and policymakers who judge high schools solely on academic achievement measured by tests. It is time to pay attention to students and the supporting research indicating that social development and rites of passage are a significant accomplishment of high schools, and that academic achievement can improve if rites of passage are linked to academics and if teaching is redesigned around adolescents' social development needs.

America has a rare opportunity in the coming decade to revolutionize high school teaching: The majority of high school teachers are expected to retire, the high school student population is growing, and education is increasingly becoming recognized as vital to sustaining democracy and contributing to the quality of individuals' lives. Students deserve new teachers who understand how to capitalize on their social needs in order to stimulate their intellectual development.

Students will continue to seek social development despite unresponsive adults, despite poor teaching, and despite well-intentioned reform policies. Redesigning teaching to foster students' intellectual development will require radical rethinking by responsible policymakers, teacher educators, and teachers.

Responsibility, a major marker of adulthood, is learned and earned. If the United States wants responsible adults, it must create opportunities for adolescents to practice becoming responsible in relevant situations. Students need to learn from teachers who themselves are responsible and responsive to adolescents, who make careful and sound judgments, and who hold high expectations for all students. High schools can be a rite of passage for *both* social and intellectual development. The question is: Do educators and policymakers have the will to radically reform high school teaching in the twenty-first century so that it builds on research and capitalizes on the window of opportunity when adolescents work hard to become adults?

Endnotes

[1]In this paper, high schools are considered to include ninth through twelfth grade.

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Table 1

Rites of Passage and Rites of Intensification

Rites of Passage	Rites of Intensification
Junior Ring Dance and/or Ceremony	Spirit Week
National Honor Society Induction	Awards and Sports Banquet
Junior Prom	Pep Rallies
Senior Prom	Homecoming Event
Senior Farewell (awards) Assembly	Holiday Hop/Christmas Dance
Senior Teacher Day	Winter Ball
Graduation	Sadie Hawkins Dance
Senior Week	Valentine's Dance
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